

# The Beet

## Food Roots & FoodCorps: A Fruitful Investment Building Habits of Self-Sufficiency in our Youth



Tillamook County Farmer, Elena Johnston, introduces baby chicks to East Elementary School Students

Food Roots is hard at work making Farm to School connections. Over 250 students have already been served this school year at East Elementary, the Junior High, TOPS, Tillamook Bay Childcare Center and at Food Roots' "Root Troop" after school program. Food Roots, in partnership with FoodCorps, a new national pilot project, is teaching and building skills with students, teachers, and parents, who are learning how to be food self-sufficient, while building healthy eating habits. The program encourages "knowing where your food comes from"

and "planting the seeds" for the next generation of gardeners and farmers. Food Roots' FoodCorps Service Member, Emily Ritchie, engages students in hands-on activities like gardening, cooking from scratch, and has introduced various Tillamook farmers to her classrooms to share their farmer-direct perspective on food and agricultural production.

Food Roots is proud to be the only rural service site in Oregon hosting a FoodCorps service member (an AmeriCorps program), through its partnership with Oregon Department of Agriculture. With FoodCorps, Food Roots is able to serve our rural community, its kids, families and schools, by providing exploration and skill building opportunities for many youth who wouldn't otherwise have this opportunity. This Farm to School programming allows these kids a chance to learn about and investigate agriculture as a viable, honorable and important career choice.

Our region is rich in agricultural culture and resources. Food Roots believes that we can regain our self-reliant roots, capitalize on our region's assets and rebuild our food system, if we develop a clear vision, strategic plans and work hard, together, to make these a reality. A recent USDA report states that local food is now a \$7 billion dollar business, nationally, and growing. But we must consider that the average age of the Oregon farmer is 55 years old. We can't afford not to invest in our youth and the next generation of farmers and food producers. Our families and economy's health stand to reap benefits from this investment; youth will be the key to our food secure future.



**Food Roots  
exists to  
cultivate a healthy  
food system for our  
North Coast  
Oregon  
Communities**

**Board Members**

- Shelly Bowe
- Emily Fanjoy
- Lauren Karl
- Brian McMahon
- Crystal Moeller
- Erica Rubin
- Kevin Shluka

**Executive Director**

Shelly Bowe

**Community Food & Microenterprise**

**Coordinator**

Lauren Karl

**Development**

**Coordinator**

Randall Koch

**Farm to School/  
FoodCorps Service  
Member**

Emily Ritchie

# Generation Organic:

## **A new crop of farmers is putting down roots from coast to coast**

By Ginger Salkowski

New York City is a strange place to contemplate soil, seeds and vegetables. The concrete streets felt about as far from my little Oregon coast farmstead as the moon. Yet just a short train ride north of Manhattan, at the Stone Barns Center for food and agriculture, is where I found myself in early December attending the fourth annual Young Farmers Conference.

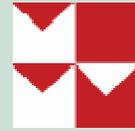
The Young Farmers Conference is unique in the nation in that it is a gathering specifically targeted at what the media has labeled “Generation Organic.” Now in my fourth year of full time vegetable farming here on the Oregon coast at the ripe old age of 38, I qualify as a member of this generation. My membership has less to do with my age (although young in comparison to the average age of the American farmer which is 55) and more to do with how I farm. Generation Organic farmers don’t tend to enter into agriculture by traditional paths. There are so few family farms left in the United States that being raised and trained on your parents acreage isn’t a reality for many. There is an old saying that farm families kept having kids until one of them turned out to be the farmer who would take over the work. I think this implies that within a certain percentage of people lies the seed of a farming spirit, a kind of calling to be close to the land. Could it be that Generation Organic are the children who are no longer born on farms but are farmers nonetheless, seeking out land on which to get their hands back into the soil? From my own experience and from sold out gatherings like the Young Farmers Conference it would seem that there is indeed an up swell among 20 and 30 something Americans to do just that.

There are great opportunities for this new crop of farmers. There is a rapidly growing interest in buying local, organic, safe food. The return of local farmers markets, the rise of CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) programs, and local meat buying clubs are just some of the many ways that consumers are connecting directly with farmers to buy their food. Direct sales mean more money in the hands of the farmer. This enables a person to make a living off of a much smaller piece of land than what has been the norm. I hand farm about 3 acres of organic vegetables and sell directly to 60 CSA farm members and at my local farmers markets. Although funds are still a struggle as I build my farm infrastructure up, it would not have been possible in an earlier decade on the coast to farm as I am today and make a living.

There are also great challenges facing Generation Organic; Land is not cheap, but food sold in chain grocery stores is, and there is an education gap for new farmers to overcome.

*Continued on page 5*

## Meyer Memorial Trust Recognizes the Value of and Invests in Oregon Community Food Systems



Food Roots has been working in Tillamook County since 1999 to learn about, strengthen and grow a more self-reliant and localized food value chain (food system). Food Roots strongly believes that our regional food system has the ability, assets and heart to transform our communities, economy and the people who live here. And so does Meyer Memorial Trust (MMT), one of Oregon's largest foundations.

In October 2011, MMT awarded Food Roots \$288,800 in funding, over three years, to partner with Clatsop County's North Coast Food Web. Our project goals are to support expansion and diversification of regional food production and access, in public and private sectors; and to connect, collaborate, create networks and build capacity through development of community assets, including food system infrastructure, financial resources and social capital. This includes social networks, volunteers, resources, knowledge, and investments in the next generation of food system leaders.

Over the last three tough economic years in Oregon, MMT awarded \$1.5 million to support the Oregon Food Bank statewide network to acquire emergency food for Oregonians who were struggling. But MMT also wanted to address the root causes of hunger and food insecurity and help build community and economic strength, particularly in Oregon's rural communities. MMT engaged two consultants to help Meyer understand what was already going on across the state in community food systems development, and provide a deeper analysis of components that make up sustainable community food systems. This also helped identify strategic opportunities, particularly around economic development. In December 2012, MMT released a report detailing their research in Oregon food systems (<http://www.mmt.org/sites/default/files/CFSfinalreport.pdf>).

As a community food organization, but not an emergency food bank, one of the biggest challenges has been explaining to folks what a food system even is, and why it is important. The term "food system" is used frequently in discussions about nutrition, food, health, community economic development, and agriculture. A food system includes all processes and infrastructure involved in feeding a population: growing, harvesting, processing, packaging, transporting, marketing, consumption, and disposal of food and food-related items. It also includes the inputs needed and outputs generated at each of these steps. A food system operates within and is influenced by social, political, economic and environmental contexts. It also requires human resources that provide labor, research and education. Complexities, challenges, needs and assets abound in each of these parts of the food system.

Both Food Roots and North Coast Food Web have spent years building relationships among individuals, communities and producers in the two-county region. Both organizations are small, but with MMT funding, we have been able to expand staff capacity and internship opportunities, and are now poised to take advantage of a number of timely opportunities. Now is the time to really reach out, connect, plan and roll up our sleeves and get to work. But this is COMMUNITY work. We can't do it without you! Please join Food Roots and our partners and find out how you can be a part of this exciting, important work.

## A Food Roots' IDA participant Graduates!

Sharon Francis, entrepreneur extraordinaire of CSA (community supported agriculture) Coyote Moon Farms, has graduated from the Food Roots Individual Development Account [IDA] Program for food-system small business owners. Sharon has been saving diligently for one year in the IDA program; a micro-grant that rewards participants with a 3:1 match on their savings investment. Fulfilling program requirements of 10 hours financial management class and writing her business plan, Sharon was awarded her matched funds and has purchased materials that will support her central Tillamook County CSA business. With these funds, Sharon has built raised garden beds, fencing to keep out elk and other pests, and other garden materials to jumpstart her business and prepares for her first season offering CSA shares in central Tillamook County this year.

### Food Roots IDA program over the past 2 years:

- 12 farm and food entrepreneurs have opened IDA's with Food Roots
- 9 participants have received 90 hours (cumulatively) of financial management sessions
- 2 participants have graduated from the IDA program; also completing 12 hours of individual business plan development; purchasing \$8,000 in business assets (savings + match)
- \$12,439 HAS BEEN SAVED out of pocket, to date, by these 12 farm and food entrepreneurs for purchasing business assets
- \$72,768 in matched funding has been reserved for Food Roots' (to date) 11 IDA participants (1 participant withdrew from the program)
- \$24,256 is the total out of pocket savings goal to be reached by these 11 participants
- \$97,024 is the total savings + reserved matched goal for these 11 participants

For more info about Food Roots' IDA program, including eligibility and how to apply, please contact Lauren Karl at 503.815.2800 or email [microbiz@foodrootsnw.org](mailto:microbiz@foodrootsnw.org)

## Food Roots' Comings and Goings!

In January, we hired a Development Coordinator as part of our work to coordinate the north coast food system network with our regional partners, The North Coast Food Web. **Randall Koch** (pictured top) joins us with twenty years experience in Tillamook County Non Profits, having served as Executive Director at Sitka Center for Art and Ecology from 1991 through 2005 and as Development Director at Neskowin Valley School from 2006 to 2011. Randall was involved in the food movement way back in the mid-seventies as an assistant manager at Food Front in Portland. Among many talents, Randall also maintains a studio practice in painting, printmaking and sculpture. "I look forward to meeting more people throughout the north coast community and helping to build on the good relationships Food Roots and North Coast Food Web have cultivated already," says Randall. Food Roots is also excited to announce the addition of new Board Member, **Kevin Shluka** (pictured bottom) who will be a wonderful South County asset. This year, Food Roots bids farewell to **Coby Weathers**, and thanks him for his year of service to the board.





## Producer Working Groups on the North Coast

Food Roots & North Coast Food Web are working to convene Producer Working Groups (PWGs) for our North Coast food producers. Modeled after many successful programs throughout our state and nationally, PWGs are informal gatherings of food producers selling a wide range of agricultural products and are meant to:

- Provide a place for food producers to share knowledge, advice & news
- Access to niche-specific workshops & experienced agricultural leaders
- Investing in pooled resources (skills, tools/supplies/equipment & monetary support)
- Identifying & implementing opportunities for collaboration

If you are interested in more information about Producer Working Groups and how you can get involved in niche-specific gatherings, please contact Food Roots; (503) 815-2800.

## Generation Organic, continued from page 2

Without inheriting the farm from family, the potential farmer is faced with a real challenge on how to get onto a decent growing field with a banking system that is hostile about loaning money to anything farm related- especially to new farmers. The generation of farmers that practiced traditional organic farming skills are now deep into retirement or passed on. There are few programs, schools or places young farmers can go to learn the hands on practical essential skills of the trade. Government subsidized food does not reflect the real cost of production for farmers. On my farm it consistently costs more to produce the food organically than I can sell it for- even at a farmers market. People just aren't willing to pay much higher prices than they see at Safeway.

With all of these factors in mind, it is nonprofits like Food Roots that are ideally suited to create the conditions Generation Organic farmers need to thrive and grow. Food Roots is helping to preserve a strong tradition of farming in Tillamook and Clatsop Counties by providing opportunities for youth to experience growing food through school gardens; funding start up farmers through their Individual Development Program; supporting farmers markets and other retail venues for local farms; and educating the public on food and farm related issues. Food Roots, along with nonprofits like Stone Barns and their Young Farmers Conference, are creating opportunities for Generation Organic and for all farmers to prosper and grow more sustainable and accessible local food systems from coast to coast.

\*Ginger's full article can be found on our website at [www.foodrootsnw.org/newsletter](http://www.foodrootsnw.org/newsletter)

Ginger is the owner of R-Evolution Gardens in North Tillamook County. You can learn more about Ginger and her amazing efforts to grow healthy seeds and food for our communities; by visiting her website at [www.revolutiongardens.com](http://www.revolutiongardens.com)



# FOOD ROOTS

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## **MARK YOUR CALENDARS!**

### **Plant & Seed Exchange & SALE**

Coming the end of April  
Check Food Roots website  
for location and date

### **THE FOOD ROOTS' FarmTable**

Saturdays at the  
Tillamook Farmers Market  
June 16th - September 29th  
9am-2pm in downtown Tillamook

### **NORTH COAST**

#### **FARM & FOOD CONFERENCE**

Saturday, November 3rd  
North Coast Recreation District, Nehalem  
Time TBD

### **STAY IN TOUCH!**

Sign up for our E-Newsletter on our  
homepage: [www.foodrootsnw.org](http://www.foodrootsnw.org)

Join us on Facebook:  
[www.facebook.com/foodrootsnw](http://www.facebook.com/foodrootsnw)



## **Thank You \* Thank You \* Thank You**

It's time to give a big THANK YOU to all the people and organizations that have given us support during the past year. It helps so much to know that you believe in our work.

- Our faithful donors who send regular contributions, and others who help out when they can
- Those of you who have volunteered or provided plants, seeds, supplies, food and materials
- Sacred Heart Catholic Church
- Tillamook Farmers Market
- Salvation Army, Tillamook Services
- Juan Young Trust
- The Swiss Society
- Lower Nehalem Community Land Trust
- Meyer Memorial Trust
- Oregon Food Bank
- OMEN and their Asset Building Corps
- The Collins Foundation
- Port of Tillamook Bay
- Spirit Mountain Community Fund
- US BanCorps
- Tillamook County Culinary Arts Program
- Whole Kids Foundation
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